

A close-up photograph of several vintage typewriter keys. The keys are made of a dark, possibly brass or steel, material with a circular top. The tops of the keys are a lighter, brownish-tan color and feature black lettering. The letters visible are 'T', 'G', 'Z', 'U', and '18'. The keys are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some keys in the foreground being more prominent than others in the background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the key tops and the metallic sheen of the key frames.

***FREDERICK
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***ABBREVIATIONS
AND SIGNS***

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Abbreviations and Signs

A Primer of Information about Abbreviations and Signs, with Classified Lists of Those in Most Common Use

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PREFACE

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The use of abbreviations and signs is often a convenience and sometimes a temptation. It is a saving of time and labor which is entirely justifiable under certain conditions, one of which is that all such short cuts should be sufficiently conventional and familiar to be intelligible to any person likely to read the printed matter in which they occur. Scientific and technical signs and abbreviations are part of the nomenclature of the subject to which they belong and must be learned by students of it. General readers are not particularly concerned with them.

The use of abbreviations and signs is partly a matter of office style and partly a matter of author's preference. Certain fairly well established rules have, however, emerged from the varieties of usage in vogue. An attempt has been made in the following pages to state these rules clearly and concisely and to illustrate their application.

Classified lists of the most common abbreviations and signs have been inserted and will be found useful for reference and practice. Sources of further information on these points will be found under the head of Supplementary Reading.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SIGNS

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INTRODUCTION

The use of abbreviations is as old as the use of alphabets. In inscriptions and on coins and in other places where room is limited they have always been used in order to save space. The words **GUILIELMUS QUARTUS DEI GRATIA REX BRITANNIARUM FIDEI DEFENSOR** would hardly go around the circumference of a sixpence, three quarters of an inch in diameter. Therefore, we find them written **GUILIELMUS IIII D: G: BRITANNIAR: REX F: D:** In the manuscript period abbreviations were very extensively used. This was done partly to lighten the great labor of hand copying and partly to effect a double saving of expense, in labor and in costly material. Certain of these abbreviations were in common use and perfectly intelligible. Unfortunately the copyists did not limit their abbreviations to these, but devised others for their own use much to the discomfort of their readers, especially after the lapse of centuries.

The introduction of printing removed the pressing necessity for the extensive use of abbreviations, but the actual use continued much longer than one would think. The early printed books were reproductions of manuscripts. In some cases the earliest were almost forgeries, and were probably intended to be sold as manuscripts. The types were cut in imitation of the handwriting of some well-known scribe and all his mannerisms and peculiarities were faithfully copied. An incidental result was the expansion of fonts of type by the inclusion of a great number of ligatures and of characters indicating the omission or combination of letters. Habit dies hard, and even after the type founders had freed themselves from the tyranny of manuscript

printers continued to follow the habits of the copyist. The saving of material and labor still continued to be considered. The methods of abbreviation in use in written matter continued to be followed in print even down to the first quarter of the last century.

The result of all this abbreviation was serious and well-founded complaint about the difficulty of reading books thus printed. De Vinne gives the following astonishing example, said to be taken practically at random from a Latin copy of the Logic of Ockham printed at Paris in 1488.

"Sic his e fal sm qd ad simplr a e pducibile a Deo g a e silr hic a n e g a n e pducibile a Deo."

These are the abbreviations for Sicut his est fallacia secundum quid ad simpliciter. A est producibile a Deo. Ergo A est. Et similiter hic. A non est. Ergo A non est producibile a Deo.

The best present usage is to use abbreviations very sparingly. Certain recognized abbreviations are used under certain conditions, but generally only under constraint of limited space.

RULES FOR THE USE OF ABBREVIATIONS

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I. GENERAL RULES.

Use no contractions or abbreviations in any place where there is room to print the words in full.

All legitimate words should be spelled out in full in text matter, but abbreviations are often needed in book work for footnotes and tables and in commercial work, where many brief forms and signs are used which are commonly understood and are as intelligible as words.

Certain special forms of printing such as market and stock reports, sporting news, price lists, directories, telephone directories, and the like make extensive use of abbreviations and signs. These abbreviations are of very limited use and often of only temporary life. They are not intelligible to general readers and should never be used outside the particular form of composition to which they pertain. De Vinne suggests that in the absence of printed authority (many of these abbreviations not appearing in the dictionary lists) every proofreader would do well to keep a manuscript book of unlisted abbreviations which he has to use repeatedly as a means of securing uniformity of form.

II. DATES.

Dates are not generally abbreviated in regular text matter; *The Declaration of Independence was signed on July the fourth, 1776.* The word *the* is sometimes omitted. The date might be written *July fourth* but never *July four*.

The abbreviations *ult. inst.* and *prox.* with a numeral (meaning *the 25th of last month, the 25th of this month, the 25th of next month*) are often used in letters, but should not be used in print unless the literal reproduction of a letter is intended.

Do not use *st*, *d*, *rd*, or *th* after a date given in figures; *August the sixth*, not *August 6th*.

The accepted abbreviations for the months are:

<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Apr.</i>	<i>July</i>	Oct.
Feb.	May	Aug.	Nov.
Mar.	June	Sept.	Dec.

The accepted abbreviations for the days of the week are:

<i>Sun.</i>	<i>Tues.</i>	<i>Thurs.</i>	Sat.
Mon.	Wed.	Fri.	

The accepted abbreviations may be used for the months when the day is given, but not when the month and year alone are given;

Jan. 15, 1916, but *January 1916*.

Some good authorities prefer the order day, month, year; *15 Jan., 1916*, but this is a matter of office style. Generally speaking the more common order is the better quite regardless of the logical character because it requires less mental effort on the part of the reader. For example in writing addresses English speaking people put the number before the street, *59 Wall St.*, while others put the number after the street, *Wall St., 59*. This is the logical order, because one goes to the street and then finds the number, but it gives to the American reader a curious sensation of mentally standing on one's head.

There is another set of abbreviations, known as the Dewey dates, as follows:

Months

Days of Week

<i>Ja.</i>	<i>Apr.</i>	<i>Ju.</i>	<i>O.</i>	<i>Su.</i>	<i>W.</i>	<i>S.</i>
<i>F.</i>	<i>My.</i>	<i>Ag.</i>	<i>N.</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>Th.</i>	
<i>Mr.</i>	<i>Je.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>Tu.</i>	<i>F.</i>	

These may be used in tables and in other places where very great condensation is necessary, but not elsewhere.

In general, much greater abbreviation is permissible in the tables, notes, and other condensed matter than in the body of the text.

III. TIME.

Statements of time should not be abbreviated in ordinary reading matter; *at half past two o'clock in the afternoon*. If the context makes it clear whether forenoon or afternoon is meant one may write:

at three, at seven o' clock.

This form is used statistically, in enumerations, in tables, and the like.

IV. OTHER ABBREVIATIONS INVOLVING THE USE OF NUMERALS.

The use of numerals and the spelling of numbers in full will be found treated at length in the Printer's Manual of Style (No. 42). As the use of the numeral is in a sense an abbreviation a few general rules may properly be given here.

1. Spell out ages;

eighty-two years and four months old.

in his eighty-third year.

children between the ages of six and fourteen.